

**Conference on Effectively Restoring Ecosystems
22-24 August 2000, St. Louis, Missouri**

BACKGROUND

Session: Plenary 11

Topic: Initiatives

Moderator: Beverley Getzen, CECW-PD

Recorder: Leroy Crosby, CESAS

Panelists:

- Beverley Getzen, CECW-PD
- Ben Borda, CELRH
- Bill Klesch, CECW-PG
- Mike Klosterman, CECW-EV

Objective: To provide a status report and discussion of on-going and new initiatives that respond to the nation's need for a healthy ecosystem.

Description: The panelists presented the overall goals and purposes of the Clean Water Action Plan, American Heritage Rivers, Livable Communities and Abandoned Mine Restoration initiatives. Accomplishments were highlighted where appropriate. How each initiative fits within the overall Corps authorities and missions was also discussed.

HIGHLIGHTS

Beverley Getzen opened the session. She noted two fundamental themes to this session, which should be able to transcend politics. The first is to use the watershed context as the prime mechanism for identifying priorities and solutions for water resources problems. The second is the use of partnerships to achieve the watershed's goals.

**America Heritage Rivers (AHR) Initiative
Ben Borda**

Ben is the river navigator for the New River, West Virginia. AHR was a White House Initiative first announced by President Clinton during the February 1997 State of the Union Address. It was implemented by Executive Order 13061. It is a "bottoms up" approach. The objectives are environmental protection, historic and cultural preservation and economic development and community revitalization. The AHR initiative offers special recognition to outstanding stretches of America's rivers by selecting them to be "American Heritage Rivers." Designated rivers receive federal assistance in the form of refocused programs, grants, and technical assistance from existing federal resources. The purpose of the initiative is to support community-based efforts to restore and protect the environmental, economic, cultural and historic values of our rivers.

Out of over 126 river nominations only 14 were designated as AHR under the program. Each river has a "River Navigator" who provides the leadership and directs the application of resources for the communities along the river. The Corps has provided the River Navigators for the Upper Mississippi River Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin and the New River, North Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. The

Corps may become involved in any AHR effort through flood protection, protecting watersheds, restoring eroded stream banks and other mission related services. Benefits to rivers under this program are National recognition, which opens doors for various programs and assistance under *existing* programs and a River Navigator to act as a resource and provide assistance.

There are several misconceptions about this Federal Assistance: There is NO new federal money, there are NO new regulations and private property rights *are* protected. This program enhances public acceptance of agencies and their roles. The things Federal agencies must do are participate, coordinate with others in the process, help find the right help and resources, develop partnerships, assess success and recommend changes. Other groups involved include an Interagency Committee, the Council on Environmental Quality, community partners and the AHR Interagency Committee Work Group.

The objectives for the New River include environmental, water quality and quantity, restoration of fish & wildlife, riparian area wetlands, replant trees/vegetation, community heritage and archeological resources. With respect to economic development, the City of Jefferson received a \$1.2 million Housing and Urban Development grant.

Additional information can be found at the web sites: www.Americanrivers.org and <http://www.epa.gov/rivers/>.

Livable Communities

Bill Kelsch

The White House Task Force on Livable Communities was created by the Clinton-Gore Administration in August 1999 to coordinate livable communities policies and activities across 18 agencies of the executive branch of the federal government. It grew out of problems with undisciplined growth. The task force is working to expand the choices available to communities to improve their quality of life, provide increased access to federal information and data, and foster community partnerships. The idea is to balance economic development, environmental protection and social justice. The goal of the effort is to help communities to revitalize American cities, towns and older suburbs, encourage new investments, bring historic neighborhoods back to life, develop alternative transportation methods, increase regional cooperation, protect the environment, create parks, preserve open spaces, and foster smarter growth.

On June 9, 2000, Vice President Gore announced the 30-point Livable Communities Initiative, which represents a package of policy actions plus a set of voluntary partnerships with communities across the country (A copy of the action plan was distributed and is also available, with hyperlinks, on Internet). The appropriate role for the federal government is to support, not to try to direct, community efforts. As a result, the Initiative is based upon three guiding principles: Communities know best, collaboration works and reinvention is imperative. A fundamental shift in the way the federal government traditionally operates is required. It must understand places, integrate policies and coordinate action.

The initiative has strong Congressional interest and support from the Nation's mayors. The Corps has been involved with the initiative in Omaha, Nebraska, Yarmouth, Massachusetts, Buffalo, New York and Cincinnati, Ohio. It offers the Corps an

opportunity to mix and integrate with other agencies and to learn from them. Other benefits:

- Represents a “growth area” for the Corps that refocuses our exiting and future missions within a national context.
- Opportunity to integrate watershed, ecosystem, Challenge 21, AHR, CWAP, Coastal America and Brownfields, etc., perspectives into contemporary issues.
- Builds and maintains staff and expertise for the future.
- Opportunity to integrate Civil Works and regulatory activities in a more proactive manner.
- Leverages and provides for a more effective and efficient use of Federal, State, Local, Tribal, NGO and Corporate initiatives, programs and resources.
- Showcases Corps existing expertise and capabilities.
- Opportunity to demonstrate a Corps role as the federal integrator/facilitator – “One door to the Federal Government”.
- Places the “Community First” - key principle of Livability.
- Opportunity to cultivate/integrate partnerships at all levels, i.e., Federal, State, Local, Tribal, NGO and Corporate in a productive, non-threatening atmosphere.
- Opportunity to learn about the development and implementation of partnerships at all levels and how other agencies conduct their business and their perception of the Corps.

Effective Corps participation in urban/rural arenas will require more creative application of existing Corps authorities, greater utilization of our core competencies and lead in the development of innovative technologies. Specifically, the Corps will need to:

- Incorporate study partner(s) objectives to a greater degree into the Corps planning process;
- Develop more multiple purpose projects in an atmosphere of collaboration; and
- Interact more effectively with other agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- Develop an “Urban Watershed” strategy to integrate all Corps assets in support of community needs.

For additional information, see <http://www.livablecommunities.gov/>.

Clean Water Action Plan (CWAP) **Beverley Getzen, CECW-PD**

The CWAP was announced on February 19, 1998. The organizing principle is the watershed approach and the major objectives are to improve information and Citizens’ Right to Know, address polluted runoff, enhance natural resources stewardship, and protect public health. It is a broad plan, including 111 action items, that uses existing programs and funding as well as new investments to address problems in our watersheds. The Corps’ participation in the Plan is through the Civil Works environmental program. Part of the Corps FY 2000 budget request includes money to help the Corps improve its

regulatory program and funding for a new program that will focus on non-structural alternatives to reducing flood damages (see Challenge 21).

There have been significant improvements in water quality since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. However, 40-50% of the Nation's waters remain impaired. The major sources of impairment include municipal and industrial (25%), urban runoff/stormwater (15%) and other sources of polluted runoff (60%). Causes of impairment include siltation, nutrients, bacteria, metals, noxious aquatic plants, oxygen-depleting substances, pesticides, priority toxic organic chemicals and oil and grease.

Specific action items which has implications for the Corps are:

- Unified Federal Policy on Federal Lands (UFP). The intent of the UFP is to enhance watershed management for the protection of water quality and the health of aquatic ecosystems on federal lands. It is an unfunded program. Operations may ask Planning to help.
- Unified Watershed Assessments. These have been conducted for most States, Puerto Rico and some tribes. The identify priority waters to help use money wisely.

Federal Coordination Teams have been set up to focus watershed activities and cooperate on plans and funding, share water quality data and information, and measure performance as a federal family.

The next steps for CWAP include:

- Completion/progress on remaining action items
- Regional roundtables in 2000
- National Forum in 2001
- WRAS's developed and projects underway
- Watershed Restoration Progress Report: December 2000

For additional information see <http://www.cleanwater.gov/>.

Abandoned Mine Restoration Initiative **Mike Klosterman, CECW-EV**

The Abandoned Mine Restoration Initiative was established to address the Corps role in addressing the nation's environmental and water quality problems caused by drainage and related activities from abandoned, inactive and post-production noncoal mines. It is responsive to Section 560 of WRDA of 1996, which includes provisions for abandoned and inactive noncoal mine restoration and supportive of the Restoration of Abandoned Mine Sites (RAMS) Program, initiated by a consortium of western Corps Districts. Proposed legislation, H.R. 2753, Abandoned Mine Restoration Act of 1999, would provide the Corps with additional authority in this area.

The Corps major customers have been the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency under the Support for others program. Issues include:

- Abuse of the Section 206 authority
- USACE liability; i.e., what's at risk?
- Office of Management and Budget Support
- Mission creep.

Questions:

Q: How do you participate on all these groups?

A: Nothing is prohibiting Divisions from dealing with issues. Have leader talks about issues and watersheds. Sniff out money from other sources. There is no new money. Market yourselves; let people know what we can do. Learn about the issues.

Q: For Ben Borda -Are you full time river coordinator?

A: Yes.

Comments:

- Michael Davis commented that he is seeing a change in how government works. Stove pipe agencies are changing how they work with each other. This is all government, not just USACE. Get regional folks to set priorities. Stop defending shifts. Regional team set priorities.
- Don't let each new initiative create its own mechanisms. Consolidate; have one team. Take advantage of existing structures. As you grow, have overlap. You may grow together and be more efficient in future